

Issue No.1

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THE A.Y. COLLECTOR

An occasional Periodical

The Toytown Plays

by Peter Copeland

Victor Home Recording
System

by David McCallum

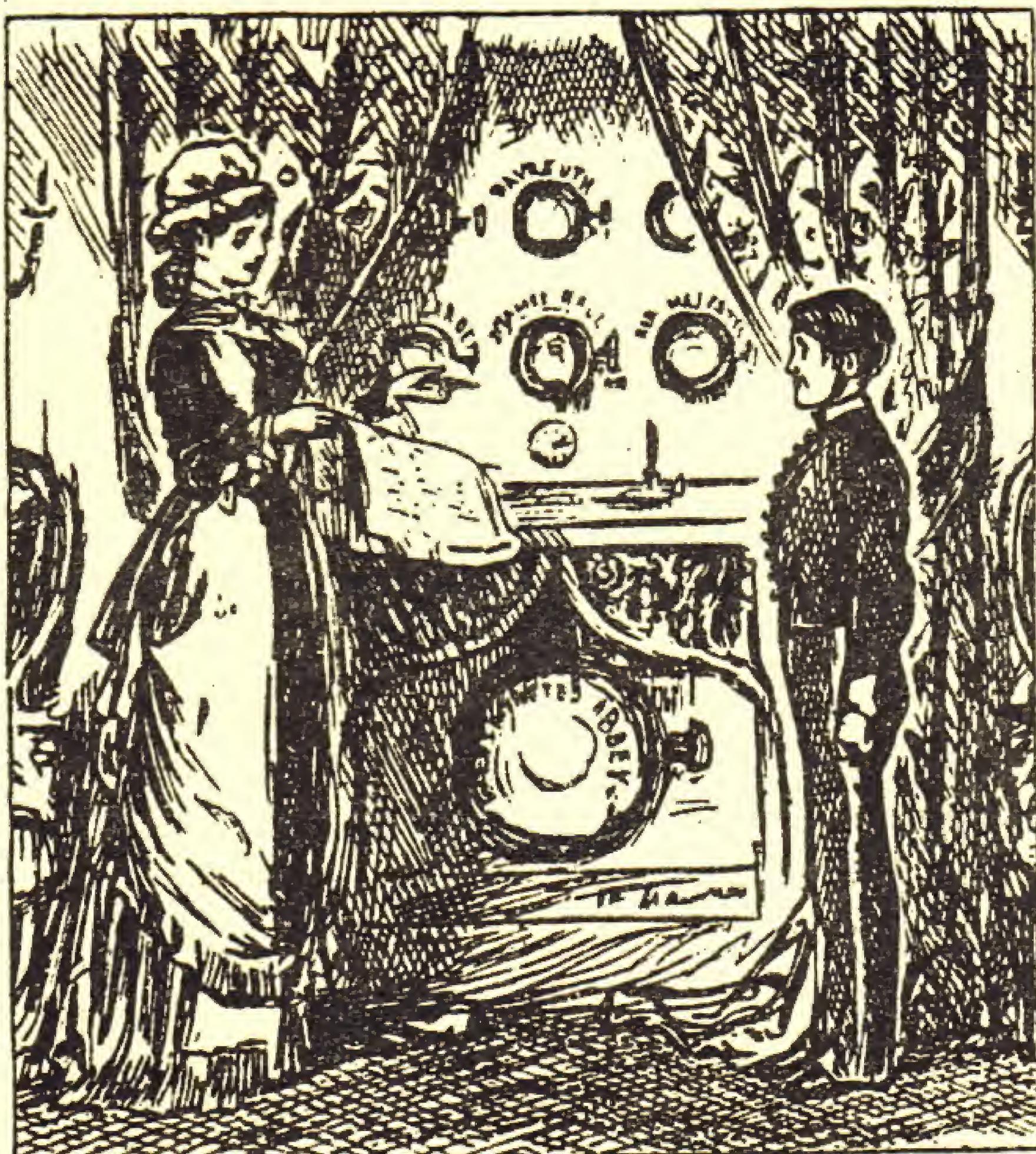
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SEPTEMBER 5, 1923.]

PUNCH, OR THE LONDON CHARIVARI.

231

GEORGE DU MAURIER AS PROPHET.



Musical Mistress of House ("on hospitable thoughts intent"). Now, RECOLLECT, ROBERT, AT A QUARTER TO NINE TURN ON "VOI CHE SAPETE" FROM COVENT GARDEN; AT TEN LET IN THE STRINGED QUARTETTE FROM ST. JAMES'S HALL; AND AT ELEVEN TURN THE LAST QUARTETTE FROM 'RIGOLETTO' FULL ON. BUT MIND YOU CLOSE ONE TAP BEFORE OPENING THE OTHER."

Buttons. "YES, MUM!"



BY THE TELEPHONE SOUND IS CONVERTED INTO ELECTRICITY, AND THEN, BY COMPLETING THE CIRCUIT, BACK INTO SOUND AGAIN. JONES CONVERTS ALL THE PRETTY MUSIC HE HEARS DURING THE SEASON INTO ELECTRICITY, BOTTLES IT, AND PUTS IT AWAY INTO BINS FOR HIS WINTER PARTIES. ALL HE HAS TO DO, WHEN HIS GUESTS ARRIVE, IS TO SELECT, UNCORK, AND THEN COMPLETE THE CIRCUIT. AND THERE YOU ARE!

From "Punch," December 14th, 1877.

The two cartoons by George Du Maurier were discovered and kindly supplied for reproduction by R.J. Johnson of Aylesbury. They are particularly apt for the launch of this new magazine.

SUBSCRIPTION

At present this magazine is supplied free to subscribers to 'The Historic Record', which is a quarterly magazine devoted to the study and appreciation of all types of records and discs of historic importance. 'The Historic Record' was founded in 1986. Contributors include Peter Copeland, Brian Rust, David Mason, Peter Adamson, Alan Hindmarch, Peter Cliffe, Jim Bain &c. In addition it is accompanied by a catalogue of records, periodicals, books, catalogues, rare 78s, LPs etc. for sale both for auction and at set prices.

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EDITORIAL

*You'll find your fortune falling all over town,
Be sure that your umbrella is upside down. (popular song)*

This may well prove to be the shortest-lived magazine and as such a candidate for the 'Guinness Book of Records'. I hope not, but have the possibility at the back of my mind as I type this introduction.

The lines from the song 'Pennies from Heaven' seemed most apt if one takes a non-pecuniary view of fortune. Since the very earliest days of broadcasting, the trickle of air waves available to the earliest 'listeners-in' has now become a veritable flood. Much of it, according to your taste, is well lost and would indeed prove an embarrassment to any future historian but therein lies the rub, for one man's dross is another man's gold. To put it another way - if one were to be given the power to recall every sound broadcast made by the BBC during the 1920s the problem would not be what to preserve but what to leave for surely every syllable uttered would be of interest to historians and archivists of every kind.

Home taping as a hobby has been growing steadily since the earliest tape recorders appeared on the market. This appears to be about 1950 but I am open to correction on this. There were, of course, machines which would record off-air before this date but I am speaking of the growth of a popular hobby. Since then, a multi-billion pound industry is now offering every kind of machine suitable for home taping from the simple radio-cassette player priced at a few pounds to the sophisticated video recorder rising to about the £1,000 mark.

Why then, has no magazine yet appeared on a regular basis to cater for the needs of a growing army of tapers and collectors? The answer can only be that publishers have been scared by the various copyright acts which have been in force throughout the period of which I speak. Indeed, we have been faced with this curious anomaly, that while the government has been drawing a good fat percentage of the sales of all kinds of recorder it has, at the same time, made the use of them illegal, and with the latest copyright act, criminal. It is true that a clause in the 1988 copyright act legalises the recording of TV and radio broadcasts for purposes of time-switching but in all other respects it is a criminal offence punishable by imprisonment to copy any record or tape whether for profit or for personal pleasure. If, for example, you were to buy a compact disc and to copy it onto a cassette for use with your 'walkman' you are committing a criminal act. On the definition of 'time-switching' there has, so far as I know, been no test case to elucidate the term. For example, a young man may tape television and radio programmes with the excuse that he is saving them for his retirement and this appears to be a legitimate defence.

I have to say at once, that this criticism is not directed at broadcasters. By and large, they have shown tolerance to their viewers/listeners who copy their favourite programmes and indeed, in the case of the BBC been glad enough to obtain copies of programmes, from collectors, of material not in their own archive. I think it is safe now, to say that where no commercial advantage is taken of taped material it is unlikely that prosecution would follow any discovery of home-taping activities.

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THE "TOYTOWN" PLAYS
by Peter Copeland

For readers who are too young to remember, I shall begin with a few words of explanation!

"The Children's Hour" was an institution dating back to the earliest days of British radio broadcasting. It went out every weekday between the times of children coming home from school and going to bed, but it was never a full sixty minutes. It was nearly always broadcast "live." At first there were several regional editions, but then the regions occasionally shared programmes, and national "network" programmes sometimes happened from 1934 onwards. It went out on Sundays as well from 1939.

For the first five years or so, various BBC employees who got on well with children were co-opted as honorary "aunts" and "uncles"; but professionals gradually took over. There was something different every day. The idea of having the same thing coming up "same time, same place on the dial" never appealed to the Children's Hour planners. But the "Toytown" plays were so consistently popular that one was broadcast every three or four weeks from 1929 to 1964, and recorded repeats continued for some years after that. I am sure most of my readers will remember Larry the Lamb ("I'm only a li-i-itte la-a-amb,"), Mr. Growser ("It's disgRRRRRaceful! It ought not to be allowed!"), Ernest the Policeman ("Larry-me-lad, I shall be obliged to take your name and address,") His Worship the Mayor ("Animals will be animals,"), and Dennis the Dachshund ("Notzing wrong mit mein woiche vas.") This article deals with the recorded legacy of Toytown.

It all began when a professional artist, Sidney George Hulme Beaman, built a wooden model of an English rural town in his attic. He populated the town with deceptively simple characters fashioned from blocks of wood. This proved attractive to local children, and Hulme Beaman was soon acting little stories to them with his models. In July 1928 the Oxford University Press published his book "Tales of Toytown" with his own illustrations.

May Jenkin, then working for "Children's Hour" in London, came across the book and dramatised five of the stories for radio. They were broadcast between 5.15 and 6 p.m. from transmitter "2LO" on the following dates :

- | | |
|----------|--|
| 19- 7-29 | Proud Punch |
| 1- 8-29 | The Tale of the Magician |
| 16- 8-29 | The Tale of the Inventor |
| 28- 8-29 | Captain Brass, the Pirate |
| 11- 9-29 | The Giles Barn Gang and the Baby Brother |

Each play was scheduled to fit into a 45-minute "slot," although the slot became thirty minutes after Hulme Beaman's death. The Radio Times which lists the first programme carries a possible explanation for this on another page. The play was also broadcast by the Plymouth transmitter 5PY. The billing for the Plymouth station has the additional words "concluding with a Thé Dansant." It was also the practice to read birthday greetings for individual children over the air each day, so it seems the plays never took the full 45 minutes.

The cast was not listed by Radio Times until many years later (September 1949), but the incidental music was credited to the Gershon Parkington Quintet. It was performed "live" of course. The quintet must practically have been living in 2LO at the time, because they provided incidental music for other programmes nearly every day of the week, and they had a sombre slab of time all to themselves every Sunday afternoon. They made records for "Imperial" in their free moments!

After a three-month gap, a new series of "Toytown" plays was announced. These were specially written for the medium of the wireless. To judge by the surviving recordings, Hulme Beaman made a very professional job of the scripts. Although there was a narrator, most of the interest centred upon the spoken dialogue. There was relatively little support from sound-effects or music, so the plays were technically simple to do. To underline the importance of the new medium, the first play was called "How The Wireless Came To Toytown." No-one seems to have worried about the anachronism of a town which was served by a stage-coach, but which also had a broadcasting station.

This play opened what is now known as the "Cycle of Toytown Plays." They were always called "Plays," not "Episodes" or "Editions." There were thirty-one altogether, and later they came to be re-performed every two or three years. That opening play had its final radio performance on 29th October 1962, and "Children's Hour" closed down for ever in March 1964. I wonder how younger listeners coped with two anachronisms, with wireless coming to Toytown during the television age.

I know readers of this magazine like to arrange their collections of recordings "in the right order." This is a bit difficult with Toytown, because although the general shape of the cycle was preserved, the original order was not always maintained for a number of reasons. There were three plays with Christmas seasonal plots. There was always an annual summer-holiday break, but there was a tetralogy of four consecutive plays which could not be split across the holiday. In 1931 the editors of Children's Hour introduced the idea of "Request Week." This was unashamedly a device for what is now called "audience research." As Toytown was very popular, certain plays were liable to be repeated during Request Week, thereby disturbing the order. In later years, disturbances can also be attributed to the demise of an actor; if he had an important part in the next play, it had to be postponed until a replacement could be found. But here is a listing of the first cycle of transmissions.

29-11-29	How Wireless Came to Toytown
27-12-29	The Sea Voyage (OS)
2- 1-30	The Enchanted Ark
30- 1-30	The Arkville Dragon
18- 2-30	Larry the Plumber
12- 3-30	Toy Town Treasure (OS)
3- 4-30	The Great Toy Town Mystery! Who was Guilty?
1- 5-30	The Extraordinary Affair of Ernest the Policeman
6- 6-30	The Portrait of the Mayor
14-10-30	The Great Toy-Town War (TTPB)
14-11-30	The Disgraceful Affair at Mrs. Goose's
9-12-30	The Showing Up of Larry the Lamb
23-12-30	The Kidnapping of Father Christmas
13- 1-31	The Babes in the Wood (TAO)
3- 2-31	The Start of the Treasure Hunt
19- 2-31	In which Mr. Growser's Worst Fears Are Realized
3- 3-31	The Wreck of the Toytown Belle, Part 1
19- 3-31	The Wreck of the Toytown Belle, Part 2
31- 3-31	Toy Town Goes West
21- 4-31	Mr. Noah's Holiday
12- 5-31	Pistols for Two
9- 6-31	Dreadful Doings at Ark Street
1- 9-31	Disgraceful Doings in Ark Street
22- 9-31	Frightfulness at the Theatre Royal
13-10-31	"Golf" (Toytown Rules)
3-11-31	Tea for Two

1-12-31	Mr. Growser Moves
22-12-31	A Toytown Christmas Party (TAO)
2- 2-32	The Brave Deed of Ernest the Policeman
23- 2-32	The Conversion of Mr. Growser
16- 8-32	Dirty Work at the Dog and Whistle

I have omitted "Request Week" repeats from the above list. All the plays were accompanied by the Gershon Parkington Quintet, except those marked OS (The Olaf Sextet), TTPB (The Toy-Town Prize Band), and TAO (The Toytown Augmented Orchestra). A year or two later the quintet was replaced by extracts from Elgar's records of "The Nursery Suite," but some unsung genius discovered His Master's Voice B8005. An HMV house orchestra called "The New Light Symphony Orchestra" performed "The Parade of the Tin Soldiers" on one side and "The Policeman's Holiday" on the other. This record proved exactly right, and supplied the signature-tunes and most of the incidental music for many years.

Aficionados will notice that some of the titles were not quite the same as they were years later, but I have faithfully reproduced them as shown in contemporary Radio Times. Inconsistencies are also seen in the spellings of Toytown, and even the author's name varies. Sometimes it is hyphenated, sometimes not; sometimes it has an L and sometimes not. The two plays dated 3rd February and 19th February 1931 were the first of the tetralogy which was later known as "The Cruise of the Toytown Belle"; as you can see, they were followed by "The Wreck of the Toytown Belle," so all four plays had to be kept together. What happened on 9th June 1931 isn't known. It seems the play was cancelled; if so, 1st September 1931 would have been its first transmission.

Besides the plays, there were further broadcasts by Hulme Beaman himself, usually talking about the models in his attic (for example, 4th February and 12th September 1930, and 5th May and 16th June 1931). There was also a special show called "Our Programme, by the Citizens of Toytown" (18th July 1930). This requires an explanation. At the time, the London station would invite a VIP (perhaps a peer of the realm) to host an edifying Children's Hour under the title "My Programme." The VIP would commission and/or perform his or her own choice of material. The Toytown version seems to have been a conscious parody of the practice; at any rate, it ceased shortly afterwards!

In February 1932 S. G. Hulme Beaman died; but the popularity of the scripts was such that the BBC was obliged to repeat them. There was a short period of apparent chaos (according to Radio Times, one play was broadcast three times in eight weeks), but a second cycle began properly in July. By this time the original audience had grown up of course, so there was now a new batch of listeners. The cycle was just the right size to continue indefinitely. Several other regions also took up the scripts and performed Toytown plays with local actors.

Because they were "live," the BBC made no recordings for transmission purposes. But a seven-minute extract from the second performance of "Larry the Plumber," broadcast from London on 30th January 1934, was ordered by the BBC from a commercial record company in the manner I described in the last edition of HR. This is the oldest surviving Toytown performance.

The next survivor is a BBC recording of the complete "Larry the Plumber" transmitted on 12th February 1947. After that come two commercial studio recordings issued on 78s, the first being How Radio Came to Toytown in time for Christmas 1947 (Decca F8908-10), followed a year later by The Arkville Dragon (Decca AF9246-8). All the commercial recordings, and the later films, were adapted and produced by Hendrik Baker. They all differed from the broadcasts because the actors performed the scripts "straight." Baker did not use the idiosyncratic characterizations which made

the radio performances appeal to adults as well as children. But I don't suppose the kids minded.

Shortly after this, a cycle of broadcasts was recorded by the BBC Transcription Service on 78rpm discs for export to commonwealth radio stations. Copies of these records do not seem to survive in London, except that two of the plays - The Great Mystery and The Conversion of Mr. Growser - were acquired from the Transcription Service and lodged in the BBC Permanent Library.

In 1960 EMI got in on the act. The HMV Junior Record Club issued four stories on EPs. First came The Toytown Mystery (7EG8607) and Tea For Two (7EG8608) in time for Christmas 1960, with music by Ron Goodwin. Next year came Larry The Plumber (7EG8707 and GES5838) and Toytown Treasure (7EG8708 and GES5839). In 1963 four more plays were issued on LP, this time with music by Johnny Pearson; they were The Arkville Dragon, The Tale of the Magician, The Showing up of Larry the Lamb, and The Mayor's Sea Voyage (Music for Pleasure MFP1103).

We revert to radio for the next development. When the 1962 cycle started, everyone realized this would be the last for several reasons. The principal actor Derek McCulloch (Uncle Mac) was aged 65, the audience was switching to television, and the television rights were already assigned to a company called Larry The Lamb Ltd. Because everyone knew it would be the last, a large number of performances from the final radio cycle have survived, ten in the BBC Permanent Library (including another performance of Larry the Plumber), plus at least thirteen others in private collections.

Everyone agreed that the "look and feel" of Hulme Beaman's original models should be preserved on the television films, which were eventually screened by Thames Television. They featured animated solid models, rather than the two-dimensional characters normal in cartoon films of the time. Four of the EMI recordings were reissued on another Music for Pleasure LP (MFP50032) to cash in on the series. For this disc, some of the music was replaced with the new television signature-tune composed by Barry Cole.

The films were issued on three commercial VHS cassettes by Tempo Video in 1988 (catalogue numbers V9089, V9132, and V9149; but don't bother to try ordering them, they've already been deleted). The plays each run just under twelve minutes, and there are five on each cassette. The visual element means most of the narration and much of the explanatory dialogue is unnecessary, so the short running-time isn't serious. All the usual plays are featured, plus the only surviving performance of The Brave Deed of Ernest the Policeman. Hulme Beaman's wooden models are fairly well simulated, except that Larry the Lamb looks (and sounds) rather effeminate. The films have the voice of Patsy Blower in the role, and the EMI recordings have Dorothy Gordon. In the latter, things sound even worse when Derek Nimmo plays the Mayor.

Today we can compare four editions of "Larry the Plumber" and judge how the performances varied over the years. There seems to be a widely-held belief that nothing ever changed. While this might be true of the radio interpretations, the actual actors changed at frequent intervals, and the surviving recordings reflect this.

The 1934 broadcast recording has Derek McCulloch as Larry the Lamb, but someone else is doing the narration, and the other voices aren't recognizable to listeners familiar with more modern versions. The BBC catalogue names the rest of the cast as C. E. Hodges, Ralph Derchan, Arthur Wynn, Brian Powley, Ewart Scott, and Cyril Nash; but it isn't clear which character is played by which actor. Arthur Wynn is known to have played Ernest the Policeman until December 1951, but the constable doesn't

actually feature in the preserved extract. The few bars audible from the Gershon Parkington Quintet show that they were playing very conventional incidental music between the scenes.

By 1947 it sounds as though the "definitive cast" is in place, but if we listen to the announcer we find that Dennis the Dachshund is being played by Norman Shelley rather than Ernest Jay or Preston Lockwood, while Arthur Wynn is still Ernest the Policeman and Ralph de Rohan is still Mr. Growser. (The latter two parts were taken by Peter Claughton and John Glyn-Jones in the late 1950s). The announcer ends his cast list with the words "the Narrator was played by Larry the Lamb." He is too modest; HE was Larry the Lamb as well!

The commercial EMI version published in 1961 runs for just under sixteen minutes. Most of the compression is done by converting dialogue sequences into narration. The cast is not "definitive," but it does include Wilfred Babbage, who played odd bit-parts in the radio series. The other actors are clearly familiar with the contemporary radio performances, and do their best to emulate them. But they cannot gild the lily, and the loss of dialogue actually becomes rather an advantage.

The last version of Larry the Plumber is the BBC Permanent Library recording of the broadcast of 15th October 1962. In 1988 it was issued in a double-cassette pack of "Children's Hour" material by BBC Enterprises (ZBBC1028). To be perfectly honest, I much prefer this recording, which shows all the classic signs of a live radio broadcast, even although it was actually pre-recorded on 10th October. We can hear the actors clearing their throats and rustling their scripts; the post-horn on the stage-coach "splits" a note; the pre-recorded incidental music wows up to speed and suffers from surface-noise; and the synchronization between Larry's hammer and the trio section of "The Parade of the Tin Soldiers" goes wrong. (The music was supposed to suggest that Larry continued hammering all afternoon). Nevertheless, the characterizations are perfect, and no wonder. Hulme Beaman's script was designed to rely on the actor's voices, and they supported it for over thirty years.

In my opinion all four existing performances of "Larry the Plumber" suffer because we are never told why the Mayor had a hole in his bath in the first place. It was unusual for Hulme Beaman to leave loose ends like that. Vital Historical Evidence Must Have Been Suppressed. Perhaps it happened when the scripts were shortened to thirty minutes after his death.

As you may gather, I am rather fond of Toytown. It would be nice if the whole cycle were to survive. Does anyone out there have copies of :

Toytown Goes West
 The Frightfulness at the Theatre Royal
 The Toytown Christmas Party
 Dirty Work at the Dog and Whistle
 and the "Toytown Belle" tetralogy?

(I should like to acknowledge the help of D. Jeremy Stevenson and Roger Wilmut in the preparation of this article).

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So where are we? To my own personal knowledge there exists in private hands a heritage of the finest examples of the broadcaster's art which would stand comparison with the great collections in other fields which are now regarded as national treasures. It is high time that we knew where they were. One of the purposes of this infant magazine is to record just what is available. If any reader is uneasy about disclosing his/her holding I am quite prepared to allow the use of pseudonyms, much in the same way that in the early days of CB radio users had to hide under a broadcasting name.

So what have you got? I have a couple of catalogues already on file but I would like to hear of your specialities. It may be that programmes which were believed to be lost forever do still exist in private hands. And here lies a danger, for we are all of us mortal. My own collection has been swelled on a couple of occasions by the acquisition of material from collectors whose sudden death resulted in their accumulation of reels being offered as 'blank tape' at a nominal price through the second-hand trade. In both cases, there was irreplaceable material including rare Formbiana and some air shots of Robb Wilton, Gert and Daisy and other music hall artists. Had I not had the luck to hear of both they may well have been taped over with the latest pop-singles. I shudder to think how much material is being lost in this way.

It is with this in mind that I hope to be able to introduce exchange facilities. Where two or more copies exist of a broadcast, the safety factor is doubled or increased by whatever number of copies are made. But it is at this point that a natural reluctance to share possibly unique material has to be acknowledged. If one has an item which is believed to be unique and a copy of it is made, it is no longer unique. If ordinary commercial terms were in operation, that would mean that its value was halved. So there is a predisposition for those collectors with rare items to sit on them, with all the risks inevitable to any unique artefact.

Nevertheless, I have been genuinely amazed at the generosity of other collectors in sharing their treasures by way of copies. I feel therefore, that some system should be devised whereby originals would be acknowledged and permission sought before further copies were made. The following information is what I suggest as a minimum label requirement on recorded material:-

- (a) GENERATION: 'Master' would indicate that the tape is a direct copy from the original broadcast; 1G would indicate a first generation copy from a master tape; 2G would indicate a copy from a copy of a master tape and so on.
- (b) OWNERSHIP OF THE MASTER: This should be indicated for first and subsequent generation copies. e.g. "1G from William Bloggs master"
- (c) SOURCE, DATE AND LENGTH OF THE ORIGINAL BROADCAST: e.g. "BBC R4 12/3/88 30m" would indicate this adequately
- (d) TITLE: This would include all information available on the contents of the tape. e.g. "Hancock's Half Hour: The Missing Page"

This is my own idea of what ought to appear on the label when a copy from one's collection is supplied or loaned to another collector. If we were all to be meticulous in this, due credit would be given to the collector who had the foresight to realize the importance of whatever item he had chosen to tape. Of course, not all the information is available, either because of the carelessness of the original copier or because the information has been lost. In such cases I think we should do all we can to record the history of the tape so far as we know it. e.g. "?G copy of ?"reel, believed to be a master owned by Wm. Bloggs. Robb Wilton - Mr. Muddlecombe J.P."

It is possible, by research, to ascertain the date of original broadcast, cast and station, and I hope I shall receive articles and sonographies from contributors in due course. Peter Copeland's "Tacytown" article is a splendid start and archetypal of the sort of thing I am looking for.

The scope of the magazine extends to all aspects of home taping including any non-commercial private recordings. I know, for example, that specialisation already encompasses such topics as radio drama, cricket, music hall, Sherlock Holmes, The Archers, Dick Barton, politics, local history, true crime, commercials, Radio Luxembourg/Normandy, BBC scrapbooks, Letters from America, Any Questions, Desert Island Discs, Gilbert & Sullivan, all the radio and TV sitcoms - the list is endless - one of my own particular interests is the work of the Yorkshire writer and broadcaster J.B. Priestley. There has long been a keen interest in old broadcasts of opera and concerts and some have been reissued on LP or compact disc. Basically the aim is to encourage the collecting and documentation of off-air and unpublished recordings, leaving the field of commercially issued recordings to 'The Historic Record'.

A particular interest of the magazine will be the history of broadcasting. Here in the UK, the BBC has produced many programmes dealing with its own history. Just to list my own holdings would take many pages - indeed, I must have a dozen or more recordings by or on Lord Reith alone. Supplemented with Professor Asa Briggs wonderful set of books on the history of broadcasting in the United Kingdom there is much to go at in this field.

We have a National Portrait Gallery and a Dictionary of National Biography, but so far as I know no National Voice Archive. At any rate nowhere that a member of the public may go and consult a catalogue of the voice recordings of every 'great Briton' who is known to have left any recording(s) of his voice. For example, what recordings exist of our recently deposed but long-serving prime minister, Margaret Thatcher. Like her or hate her there can be no disputing the historical importance of a collection, well documented, of all her speeches, interviews, chats and other recordings. I would love to know how many have survived. The lady may be far from finished politically. Even as I write I am trying to catch an interview she has given to David Frost for Sky Broadcasting to add to my own collection. My own idea of how such a catalogue may be arranged would be something on these lines:-

Admiral Sir Harold Green (1865-1950) [fictional]

350218 Talk on 'Jutland' BBC 10m C15/6

400631 Interviewed on the difficulties of seaborne evacuation. BBC 5m
7/016

460315 News item regarding his appointment as chairman of UNRO. BBC
Home Service. 2m C17/4

The number on the left is the date in computer form, followed by a description of the item, then the length in minutes and then the location. Every collector will have his own method of indicating the whereabouts of a particular broadcast. My own system is to use prefixes - numerical for reel-to-reel tapes according to diameter [7/125 indicates 7" reel number 125], V for video cassette, C for audio cassette. Of course some broadcasters would require a full page or even several pages to encompass all their broadcasts. I have no doubt whatever that the BBC has such a system in their own archives but it should be borne in mind that (a) these are not available to the public and (b) it is almost certain that there are items in private hands which the BBC does

not have.

I should make it clear that the responsibility for this magazine is mine alone and at the time of writing no other person knows of its launch. The two articles were intended by the writers as contributions to 'The Historic Record' but have been thought by me to be more suitable for 'The A.V. Collector'

VICTOR HOME RECORDING SYSTEM Some further observations by David McCallum

In a recent copy of THE HISTORIC RECORD reference was made to the Victor Home Recording System. This jogged my memory that I had a packet of blank Victor recording discs acquired several years ago.

The discs, six inches in diameter and made of what appears to be black vinyl or some closely allied plastic, are pre-grooved across 1/4 of their diameter, have no run-in groove and have the double-locked groove with no out-spiral typical of of Victor and HMV records made during the Western Electric recording period. They are double-sided and are supplied in a blue paper sleeve with no centre hole. Instructions as follows occupy the centre of the sleeve: "Pick up the microphone, record into the instrument, then sit down and hear yourself as others hear you! Victor Home Recording Records reproduce what you want to hear, when you want to hear it and by whom!" About one minute of recording time is available per side at 78 rpm.

I was surprised to notice that one side of my three discs had evidently been recorded. This shows in the first quarter inch of the grooved area of the photocopy attached. It is an embossing produced by the special stylus provided (I have not seen one) being driven by the pick up connected to the output of the record-player amplifier. The coil must have been quite robust; RCA pick-ups of this period were moving iron types, the relatively high impedance (compared with the speakers voice coil) would have limited the coil current.

Moving now to the circuit diagram of the RCA Victor Micro-Synchronous radios types R.35, R.39 and RE.57, we see the special modifications incorporated to allow use of the Victor Home Recording system. The audio amplifier is a substantial one consisting of a "27" triode driving a push-pull pair of "45" power triodes. The secondary winding of the output transformer may be connected (normally) in the 'reproduce' mode, to the electro dynamic speaker, or in the 'record' mode to the pick-up, which under these conditions and with the special stylus fitted, embosses the signal onto the pre-grooved disc.

The recordist may choose between recording "radio" or recording "voice" via the hand-microphone provided. This was accomplished by appropriate setting of the "Transfer Switch". I would, from the general configuration of the circuit and valves used, presume that these RCA models were current c1928-1931.

[David is president of the Phonograph Society of New South Wales to whom, greetings! He has kindly supplied photo-copies of a record blank, the two sides of the buff-coloured Victor mailing envelope, the blue-coloured envelope for blanks and also a large circuit diagram of the above mentioned radios. I do not have room to reproduce these but if anyone is interested please send a large stamped-addressed envelope for copies. David has also supplied a photo-copy of an article which appeared in the BBC Yearbook for 1934 entitled 'The Application of Sound Recording to Broadcasting'.]

Letter from Howard Cooper:- I have been browsing though the latest list of sale items with much interest. You certainly have some fascinating items to offer which I would like to possess. Unfortunately there is always a snag for collectors, apart from cost, and that is storage space.

My own collection consists of about 1,000 LPs, 1500 78's, 500 cassettes plus a number of reel tapes, videos and CDs. If one has a small house, storage space becomes a real problem especially when temperature and humidity need to be controlled.

With this in mind, I wonder whether you would be willing to offer a slightly different service to collectors like myself.

If you could transfer specific records from your stock to cassette or hi-fi video, warts and all, without filtering or equalisation etc. collectors would then be free to do their own equalising and filtering... [There are some difficulties here which cause me to hesitate. The most obvious is the time factor. From experience I know that it takes a lot of time to find a record or tape, copy it, label the cassette, post it off etc. At the moment, time is the thing I am most short of. The other factor is the attitude of the prospective purchaser who may object to the fact that his rarity has been copied and made freely available. So I am afraid that on this particular proposal it will have to be thumbs down. However, like most collectors I am always keen to exchange tapes to the mutual advantage of both parties. Indeed this is the whole purpose of this little magazine. ed.]

I had a telephone call from Göran Söderwall in Sweden seeking help in playing early Russian LPs. He wonders if there is a special stylus that he could have made which would improve their reproduction.

OFF-AIR FINDS

I recently came across a group of recordings in a most unlikely retail outlet. They consisted of a number of compact discs or cassettes of classical performances issued by obscure foreign companies. I bought them with some trepidation because they were clearly aimed at the popular market. On listening to them it became clear, I think without exception, that they had been edited from live performances, probably by amateur off-air tapists. It was only upon closer investigation that I realized that here were some performances not documented or at least previously issued only on obscure labels.

Let me say at once that I do not have all the discographies I would need to check out all the performances, so I will list them as they appear in the various packages:-

PACKAGE 1: ...WORLD FAMOUS CONCERTS. A box of 10 compact discs, made in Italy under the label "Concerto" and numbered with a 'CON' prefix. Each compact disc is devoted to a composer, one each except for Beethoven who commands three.

- CON-02: MENDELSSOHN: M.S.N. Dream Ov. & March - Klemperer & Bayerischen Rundfunk Orch (Monaco, 23 May 1969); Violin Con - Heifetz vln & Cantelli with New York Phil (New York, 14 Mar 1954); Italian Sym - Celibadache with BPO (Berlin 9 Nov 1953)
- CON-04: DVORAK: Violin Concerto - Isaac Stern with Mitropoulos & New York Phil (Berlin, 4 March 1951); Symphony 9 'New World' with Celibadache conducting the Turin Sym. Orch. (Turin, 5 Jan 1962)
- CON-05: BRAHMS: Double Concerto - Boskovsky vln, Brabec vlc & Furtwangler with VPO (Vienna, 27 Jan 1952) [Previously issued on a number of minor labels]; Symphony 4 - Karajan & BPO (Berlin, 28 Sept 1968) [Not in John

Hunt's discography)

- CON-06: TCHAIKOVSKY: Piano Con. No. 1 - Van Cliburn piano with Kertesz & RIAS Berlin Orch (Berlin, 28 Aug 1961); Sym Pathetique - Toscanini & NBC (21 Mar 1954)
- CON-07: MOZART: Symphony No. 1 - Scherchen & Turin Sym.Orch (8 April 1952); Piano Con 25 K503 - Ciani piano with Barbirolli & RAI Naples Orch (5 Jan 1968); Jupiter Sym - Bohm with BPO (22 Feb 1968)
- CON-08: CHOPIN: Piano Concerto No.1 - Pollini with Katlewickz & Varsava Phil. Orch (Varsavia, March 1950); Piano Concerto No.2 - Rubinstein with Giulini & LPO (London - 16 May 1960); Andante Spinato & Grande Polonaise - Richter with Kondrashin & LSO (London, 16 July 1961)
- CON-11: BERLIOZ: Ov Carnival Romaine - Toscanini & NBC (New York - 10 Jan 1953) Romeo and Juliet - Celibadache & Turin Sym.Orch (4 April 1960); Symphonie Fantastique - Markevitch & Berlin Radio Sym.Orch. (Berlin, 18 Sept 1952)
- CON B-02: BEETHOVEN: Symphony 3 'Eroica' - Karajan & BPO (Berlin, 22 Sept 1969) [Not listed in John Hunt's discography]; Symphony 1 - Furtwangler & VPO (Vienna, 30 Nov 1952) [previously issued on Fonit Cetra FE 33 in 1982]
- CON B-04: BEETHOVEN: Symphony 7 - Karajan & BPO (Salzburg, 8 Apr 1968) [Not in John Hunt's discography]; Symphony 4 - Bohm & VPO (Budapest, 4 Nov 1969)
- CON B-05: BEETHOVEN: Symphony 5 - Klemperer & BPO (Berlin, 11 May 1966); Symphony 2 - Bohm & BPO (Salzburg, 11 Aug 1968)

I can offer sets of the above ten compact discs in special box at £30 per set. [3 sets only available]

PACKAGE 2: This consists of a set of four compact discs. Each disc is devoted to one conductor. Again, they are all live performances. They are of Italian manufacture issued under the "Virtuoso" label.

- 2697012: TOSCANINI WITH NBC SYM.ORCH: MUSSORGSKY - Pictures (New York, 24 Jan 1953); DVORAK - New World Sym (New York, 31 Jan 1953)
- 2697022: BRUNO WALTER: ALL MOZART: Sym. 36 with French Nat. Orch (Paris, 1956); Sym. 39 with New York Phil. (New York, 1956); Eine Kleine Nachtmusik with French Nat. Orch (Paris, 1956)
- 2697032: MITROPOULOS WITH WESTDEUTSCHER RUNDFUNK ORCH: STRAUSS Also Sprach (Cologne, 7 Sept 1959); MENDELSSOHN Scottish Sym (Cologne, 1957)
- 2697042: KLEMPERER WITH PHILHARMONIA ORCH: BEETHOVEN: Symphony 5; Overtures to Prometheus, Egmont, Coriolan (All Vienna, 1960) [Only the performance of the Coriolan overture is listed in Pettitt's discography of the Philharmonia Orchestra.]

I can offer sets of the above four compact discs in special box at £12 per set [5 sets only available]

PACKAGE 3: This consists of a set of eight cassettes, each playing for approximately an hour and comprising live performances of Mozart. It would take too much space to list them all, but notable performances are as follows:-

Backhaus - Sonata 11 K331; Michelangelo playing Piano Con 13 K145; Brendel/Klemperer - Piano Con. 25 K503; Edwin Fischer - Rondo K382; Celibadache - Haffner Sym; Szell/Concertgebouw - Sym 34; Grumiaux & Haskill - Violin Sonata K304; Karajan conducts excerpts from Don Giovanni; Richter & Benjamin Britten in Piano Con. 22 K482; Bruno Walter - Haffner Sym; &c &c.

I can offer sets of eight cassettes in special box at £12 per set [4 sets only available]

SOME NOTEABLE RECENT BROADCASTS

Perhaps the most startling transmission was the actual killing of a local council representative which was filmed for television news. This may not be the first actual killing to be shown to viewers in the UK but I cannot recall another example. I missed it - but some of you may have been more alert. Of course, it raises the issue of what ought to be recorded. Am I guilty of bad taste in suggesting it as a collectable subject. Others may have in their collections the Bradford F.C. fire disaster, the Heysell Stadium or the Hillsborough disasters. I have a pre-recorded video of major disasters of the past including the R-101 and a dreadful occasion when naval ratings were carried into the air by an escaped balloon until, one by one they had to release their holds and fall to their deaths. Is this sort of thing historic or just macabre? Some few years ago YTV were set to release a video about the 'Yorkshire Ripper' and it was actually advertised in a printed hand-out. There was a furore from members of the public and it was withdrawn. Copies must be extremely rare.

Another bit of news coverage which was unprecedented was the angry attack made by one former prime minister on another. On both Channel 4 and BBC2 'Newsnight', Edward Heath berated Margaret Thatcher over her U.S. speeches on a European common currency. It was certainly excellent tele-vision viewing and on this occasion I was more astute and obtained both interviews.

BBC's Radio 4 came up with another batch in that excellent series 'Radio Lives'. These forty-minute documentaries each take a well-known broadcaster of the past as their subject. On this occasion we have J.B. Priestley, Tommy Handley, Lady Isobel Barnett, William Hardcastle. The programmes are a mixture of the actual voice of the subject and reminiscences of persons associated with them. Well worth keeping if you are at all interested in radio history.

There is no doubt that the drama sensation of the period has been YTV's dramatisation of H.E. Bates 'The Darling Buds of May'. This seems to have caught the public imagination both for its period charm and its bucolic attitude to country life. I watched a couple of episodes but shall not be keeping it in the collection. The other much heralded drama series is 'GBH' by Alan Bleasdale. I have not even bothered to watch this as I am allergic to Alan Bleasdale. On the other hand, I did quite enjoy the somewhat sentimentalised account of a 'Battle of Britain' pilot and his attempt to come to terms with severe burns, in ITV's 'A Perfect Hero'. Nigel Havers is a fine actor if somewhat typecast as a suave public school type. Bernard Hepton played the father. It is always reassuring to have him in the cast, but again, I shall not be keeping the series, although the signature tune was both ironic and maddeningly unforgettable.

Those of you, like me, with an interest in true crime, will be pleased to know that 'Radio 5' is to repeat fifty or so episodes of 'The Black Museum' which was a 1950s series of true crime dramatisations based on articles housed in Scotland Yard's 'Black Museum'. Orson Welles presents the programmes and though they run well under the half-hour they are useful accounts of criminal investigations and fine examples of period radio which are well worth keeping. The American series 'Dragnet' is also being repeated. It is worth keeping an

eye on Radio 5 and its output.

'Radio 2' continues to produce some interesting material even if much of it is embedded in disc-jockey anonymity. It is worth checking the John Dunn 'After Six' interview in order to catch the occasional interviewee of note. Un-fortunately the slot is usually reserved for the ignoble purpose of plugging books rather than plumbing people. Even so, it was good chance to hear Sir Bernard Lovell again. Many, I know, will treasure the original BBC broadcast of 'Our Present Knowledge of the Universe' which I have both as an off-air item and on the BBC LP on which it was later offered for sale. Also worth checking is the Sunday night 'Radio 2 Arts Programme' (10pm - midnight) which has covered some out-of-the-way topics at length. Last night (June 23rd) there was a long look at the fifty years of Puffin Books. This contained an interview with Pamela Lyndon Travers who wrote 'Mary Poppins', among other stories for children - an invaluable and sensitive interview with this octogenarian authoress. Other topics covered by 'Radio 2 Arts' have been James Joyce, Cole Porter, Jazz, Music for Television and so on.

CATALOGUE ENTRIES

In order to explain my own system of cataloguing I have chosen some recent broadcasts of note for which I use the following system of entries: (a) Main area. This may be cross-referenced with other entries if I see it is warranted. (b) Title (c) Presenter or principal actor (d) Class. My own system of classification based on the Dewey system with modifications (e) Source (Mostly TV or radio station abbreviated as BBC1; BBC2; ITV; C(hannel)4; SK(Y)A(RTS); R(ADIO)1 to 5; BSB etc. (e) length in minutes where known (f) Date of recording as six figures beginning with the year (g) Location according to my own system; (h) Period if appropriate beginning with the year (i) Type of programme - D = documentary, P = Play; S = Series; M = Music; C = comedy &c (j) Type of recording where V = video; A = audio; M = mono and S = stereo, so that 'VS' is a video recording with stereo sound.

Austen (Jane) Remembering Jane Austen by James Austen-Leigh, Parker (Derek)
823.000000 R4 17 910410 VX38/6 D/S AS

To take this first entry as an example, Jane Austen is the main area, 'Remembering Jane Austen' is the title, Derek Parker is the presenter, 823.000000 is the classification for English novels, Radio 4 is the source, 17 minutes is the length, 10th April 1991 was the broadcast date, VX38/6 is my location code, D/S indicates a documentary series, AS indicates an audio recording in stereo. I hope this makes my system clear. Here are some more recent acquisitions:-

Bart (Lionel)	This is Your Life, Aspel (Michael)	782.820000	ITV	30	910403	
VX36/7	D/S	VS				
Bates (H.E.)	The Little Farm. Complete in 3 episodes,	Neal (David)	823.000000			
R4	51	910404	VX36/2	R/S	AM	
Biopic: Murrow (Edward J.)	Murrow. Travanti (Daniel J.)	70.000000	C4	130		
910403	VX36/2	F	VM			
Bookshelf: Ngaio Marsh.	Lively (Penelope)	823.000000	R4	25	910411	
AM		VX38/7	D/S			
Bowlby (Al)	Dance Band Days documentary.	Dell (Alan)	784.331000	R2	30	910415
VX38/3	M/S	AS				
Brooklands: Nostalgic memories of...	796.700000	R5	30	910402	C100/17	D AM
Cotton (Bill Jr.)	Plunder interview.	Freud (Emma)	791.457000	BBC2	30	910403

VX36/7 I/S VM
 Cryer (Barry) at the Palace of Varieties, Leeds. 792.010000 YTV 5 910403 VX36/7
 D VM
 Dance Band Days: A Salute to Al Bowlly. Dell (Alan) 785.411000 R2 30 910415
 VX38/3 M/S AS
 Fleming (Alexander): Horizon documentary. 616.000000 BBC2 50 910408 VX38/8 4005
 D/S VM
 Grappelli (Stephane) meets Jim McKillop, violin maker. 787.110000 BBC2 5 910415
 VX36/11 D VM
 Greene (Graham) Obituary repeat. 823.000000 C4 35 910407 VX38/12 D VM
 Kaye (Danny) Happy Times... A portrait of... Wynter (Mark) 778.500000 R2
 60 910401 VX36/12 D/M AS
 Laye (Evelyn) Evensong [film] 782.132000 C4 95 910403 VX36/7 F/M VM
 Lean (David) film director: Obituary Replay 778.500000 BBC1 30 910416 VX38/10
 D VM
 Lean (David) film director: 'Late Show' Obituary tribute
 778.500000 BBC2 45 910416 VX38/10 910416 D/S VM
 Marsh (Ngaio) 'Bookshelf' documentary on... Lively (Penelope) 823.000000 R4
 25 910411 VX38/7 D/S AM
 Messaien (Olivier) Kaleidoscope documentary on... Amis (John) 780.077300 R4 30
 910401 VX36/12 D/S AS
 Murrow (Edward J.) Murrow [Biopic] Travanti (Daniel J.) 70.000000 C4 130 910403
 VX36/2 F VM
 Nazis (The) Swing under the Swastika [Jazz in the 3rd Reich] Plater (Alan)
 943.000000 C4 60 910409 VX38/2 30s D VM
 Rattle (Simon) R2 Arts documentary interview. Amis (John) 780.076000 R2 120
 910414 VX38/3 I/M AS
 Supervia (Conchita) Evensong [film] Laye (Evelyn) 782.132000 C4 95 910403
 VX36/7 F/M VM
 Weatherly (Fred): Up from Somerset. Biographical documentary. Camerata (Bob)
 784.339100 R2 58 910416 VX38/10 D/M AS
 Wheeler (Mortimer) Sir: Chronicle 2/2 913.000000 BBC2 50 910405 VX38/7
 D/S VM